

Deuteronomy 26 - Thursday, December 1st, 2011

(1) "And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, (2) that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and put *it* in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. (3) And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, 'I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the country which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.'

- Here Moses tells them how that they are to bring the first that all their crops produce to the place that God chooses and makes His name abide.
- It's interesting to note the why behind the "what" of this offering. It was for the purpose of declaring vocally that God made good on His promise.
- In other words, God had given them the land just as He promised in spite of the fact that everything leading up to this point had contradicted it.

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for the remainder of our study here in Deuteronomy, as I tackle this chapter a little bit differently than we usually do.
- What I would like to do is identify within the passage a life application, or life lesson if you prefer, that we can sort of take with us as a take away.
- In the first three verses we have our first one, which is that we shouldn't interpret adversity or opposition as evidence that we're not in God's will.

- In the first three verses we also have our second one, which is to remember, honor, and thank the Lord, sometimes vocally, for what He's done.
- This is really the essence of our praise, worship and thanksgiving. Actually, there is a notable distinction between our praise and our worship.
- What I mean is, we can thank and praise someone for a job well done, but that doesn't mean that we're also worshipping them for what they did.

- I've been musing over this as of late especially in the context of sermon preparations as it relates to our desire for God, and our worship of God.
- I have to ask myself whether I'm preaching about what we should do for God, or am I preaching how we respond to what God has done for us.
- If I preach what God has promised to us, and done for us, then like Moses is preaching in this sermon to the Israelites, I'll declare what God did.

(4) "Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God. (5) And you shall answer and say before the LORD your God: 'My father *was* a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. (6) But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. (7) Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. (8) So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. (9) He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, "a land flowing with milk and honey";

- There's something I need to draw your attention to in these verses, and I realize that some of you may have already caught it in our reading of it.
- There's a two-fold declaration and proclamation of God delivering them out of slavery in Egypt and giving them prosperity in the Promised Land.
- Also, notice that this is still all by faith, in that they are not in the Promised Land yet. They are not walking by sight; they are walking by faith.

- Ever so beautifully and perfectly woven into the fabric of these verses we have our third and fourth life lessons, and they are absolutely huge!
- Here's what I'm thinking; my response to what God has done for me, will be that of both confessing and professing how He has delivered me.
- Secondly, God has given me life, and that more abundantly, if I, by faith, will believe in it as that which is hoped for, the evidence of that unseen.

(10) and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me.' "Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God. (11) So you shall rejoice in every good *thing* which the LORD your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who *is* among you.

- Moses not only tells them how to give, he tells them what they're to say and the way in which they're to say it, in their offerings unto the Lord.
- At the risk of sounding redundant, we give in response to what God has given us. This presupposes that we're mindful of what God's given us.
- If you're relatively new to Calvary Chapel Kaneohe, this may answer for you why it is that we don't receive an offering in the traditional way.

- Please don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with doing that it's just that the Lord has made it clear that if I just teach the Word people give.
- Let me say the same thing a different way; if I'm faithful in teaching you the whole counsel of God, you will realize all that God has done for you.
- Your response will in turn be to rejoice and give to God both generously and cheerfully. Our life lesson is Tithing is a "get to," not a "got to."

Jon Coursen said it best in his commentary when he wrote; "For you and me, the firstfruit are the tithe. We're to say, 'Lord, You've blessed us. You've done so much for us. You've been so patient with us. You've been so good to us. And now we bring You the firstfruit of what You gave us.' Notice that this is to be done with rejoicing. Tithing is not a time of tears, but a time for cheers, (2Corinthians 9:7)."

2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

(12) "When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year—the year of tithing—and have given *it* to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled, (13) then you shall say before the LORD your God: 'I have removed the holy *tithe* from *my* house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten *them*. (14) I have not eaten any of it when in mourning, nor have I removed *any* of it for an unclean *use*, nor given *any* of it for the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded me. (15) Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, "a land flowing with milk and honey." "

- Passages like this re-enforce the practice of some churches who will pray over, and pray for, the tithe that they are giving, and God is receiving.
- This is what we see Moses preaching to the Israelites. They are thank God, praying to God, and in their obeying of God, giving God their tithes.
- Herein we have our sixth life lesson; it's not how much we give as much as it is how we give our much, thus we give with an attitude of gratitude.

- There's one more thing I want to point out here before we move on to verse sixteen. Notice how they are to pray for God's blessing on them.
- In other words, in our obediently and cheerfully giving to God, we give Him every reason to bless us, and conversely no reason to not bless us.
- This is our seventh life lesson; when we're obeying of God, we give permission to God, in so much as He will now open up His hand of blessing.

(16) "This day the LORD your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. (17) Today you have proclaimed the LORD to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that it emphasizes the importance of a public profession of walking with God.
- If you really think about it, when we audibly, publicly, make a declaration and proclamation for God, it comes packaged with the accountability.
- This is our eighth life lesson; it is vital that we publicly profess our faith in God, because it will insure that we observe our commitment to God.

(18) Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that *you* should keep all His commandments, (19) and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken."

- Moses says they're to keep all His commandments just as He promised, and He would set them high above all nations that they may be holy.
- It's crucial we understand what's being said here because the fact of the matter is many a Christian misunderstands what's not being said here.
- Namely, that God requires me to keep His commandments and be holy. That's not what's being said. What's being said is God wants us whole.

- There's no way to be whole/holy, absent the obeying of God's commands. When we disobey God's commands, we're half, not whole or holy.
- Sin degrades us, devalues us, and you'll forgive my choice of words, sin cannibalizes us. God loves us so much; He wants what's best for us.
- This is our ninth and last life lesson as we bring it to a close; God's Ten Commandments should really be seen as His Tender Commandments.

- By way of illustration I have laid down the law in my home with my children and in so doing I have given them commandments they should obey.
- If they are deceived and have believed that I don't want them to have any fun, then they will perceive these commandments as being unfair.
- Furthermore, if I seek to enforce them with my God given authority as their father, they will be more prone to rebel against me, and my authority.

- Now, if on the other side of this table, they realize that I love them so much, that I don't want them to be injured or hurt, they will see it differently.
- They will perceive and thus receive my commandments being careful and prayerful to observe them, because they will protect and direct them.
- This is what's referred to as a paradigm shift best explained with the illustration of thinking that someone has had the audacity to steal my Bible.

- When I see that they actually had the nerve to steal my Bible and not think that I wouldn't somehow notice, I become indignant and appalled.
- Then, when I reach down for my belongings to find another pew as far away from this demon-possessed individual, I see my Bible is still there.
- In that moment, it hits me, that they didn't actually steal my Bible; they own the same exact Bible as my Bible. That is called a paradigm shift.

- Now, you may be asking yourself what's my point, and how does this apply to the text. Well, I am so glad you asked; allow me to explain this
- We are so prone to see God's commands as taking from me, dare I say stealing from me, that which belongs to me. This is a lie from the pit.
- God's commands are not to take from me; they are to give to me, so I can be the recipient of that which is best for me, namely, wholeness!